



DATE: February 18, 2021 **COMMITTEES:** Health and Government Operations
BILL NO: House Bill 736
BILL TITLE: Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports House Bill 736 - Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact

Bill Summary:

House Bill 736 creates an interstate licensed professional counselors compact, to be enacted when nine other states have also passed legislation substantially similar to this Act.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

Licensed Professional Counselor Services: Kennedy Krieger provides approximately 134,000 behavioral health appointments to 15,000 families per year, of whom over 1000 live outside of the state of Maryland.

Out of State Services: Kennedy Krieger Institute provides specialized services to patients nationally and internationally. In pre-pandemic times, families would need to make arrangements to complete the potentially costly and time consuming trip to Kennedy Krieger Institute to obtain the skilled services their child and/or family required. In our current and uncertain time with COVID-19, the telehealth service delivery model enabled our providers to see patients from 44 of the 50 states in 2020 but barriers with licensure and regulations can cause significant delays and sometimes, an inability to provide the specialized care. With the complete services offered both at Kennedy Krieger Institute locations, in our community, and in the homes of our patients and their families combined with our geographic proximity to numerous surrounding states, there has been and will continue to be extreme struggles in providing care in the absence of an interstate compact.

Rationale:

An interstate compact will allow a formal and legal relationship amongst states that promote a common agenda, to improve the health and wellbeing of the patients and families that we serve so they can live their lives to the fullest. An interstate compact will allow families across participating states to have access to the highest quality of licensed professional counseling services available, while also decreasing the burdens placed on the patient, family, and healthcare system. In addition to improving access to counseling services, the interstate compact would ensure quality control of out of state providers by creating practice requirements and an oversight process. Though the need for an interstate compact has existed for many years, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed this need to the forefront. Telehealth allows increased access to quality care with a potential that cannot be fully realized with the current absence of an interstate licensure compact. As states begin to modify their telehealth waivers and remove the expedited licensure policies put into place due to the pandemic, access to care and continuity of care will be restricted and, as a result, the full potential of those who need specialized services will not be realized. Many national professional counseling organizations have been working on and supporting interstate compacts for years, including, but not limited to, the American Counseling Association, the American Association of State Counseling Boards, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, the American Mental Health Counselors Association, and the National Board for Certified Counselors.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on House Bill 736.